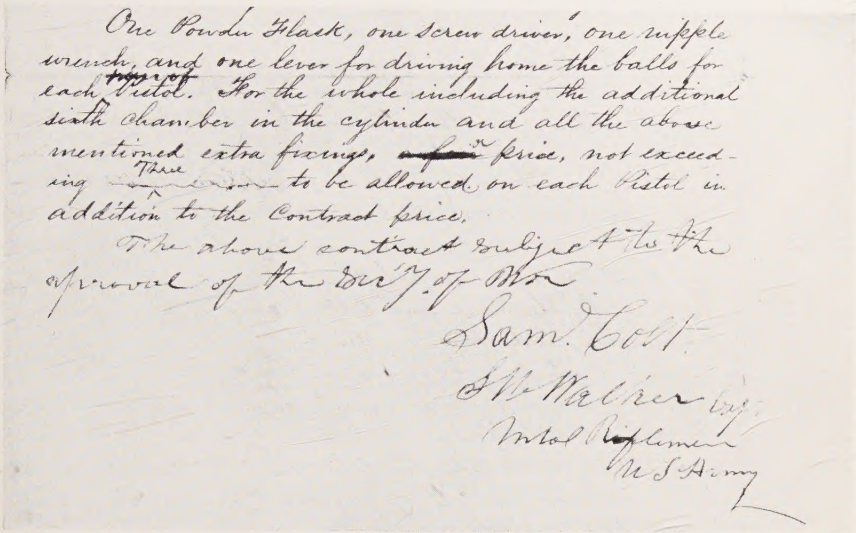
Connecticut Historical Society
BULLETIN

Volume 13 Hartford, April, 1948 Number 2


One Powder Flask, one screw driver, one nipple wrench, and one lever for driving home the balls for each ~~pistol~~ Pistol. For the whole including the additional sixth chamber in the cylinder and all the above mentioned extra fixings, ~~one~~ Three price, not exceeding ~~one~~ Three to be allowed on each Pistol in addition to the Contract price.

The above contract subject to the approval of the Sec'y of War

Sam. Colt

S. H. Walker Capt.
Mtd Riflemen
U. S. Army

COLT–WALKER CONTRACT

BY JOHN E. PARSONS*

Recent study of the Samuel Colt papers which were presented to the Society in 1915 by Charles E. Gross has brought to light an executed original of the document whereunder manufacture of the Colt revolver in Connecticut was begun. This was the agreement of January 4, 1847 between the inventor and Captain Samuel H. Walker, United States Army, acting on behalf of the War Department, for the construction of a thousand repeating pistols under Colt's patent.

The pistols were ordered for the use of the United States Mounted Rifles into which Captain Walker's company of Texas Rangers had been incorporated at the inception of the war with Mexico. They were known as the Walker model because of improvements in design suggested by him. Earlier types of Colt's pistols had been made at Paterson, New Jersey, from 1836 until 1842, when the Patent Arms Manufacturing Company which made them failed. It was the military value of these weapons, proven in the Texas

* Author of *Catalogue of a loan exhibition of percussion Colt revolvers and conversions 1836-1873.* Published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1942.

border fighting, that led the Army and Captain Walker to seek a further supply. The new lot of revolvers was made in Whitneyville, Connecticut at the armory of Eli Whitney, to whom Samuel Colt, then having no facilities of his own, assigned the contract. Of the original thousand some fifty specimens survive today, and are generally considered by collectors the choicest and most valuable of all Colt percussion arms.

Captain Walker rejoined his command in Mexico and was killed in action at Huamantla in October 1847. Before his death the Secretary of War had placed a second order for an additional one thousand revolvers. Samuel Colt was thereby enabled to commence manufacture of his arms in a plant of his own established at Hartford, where Colt's revolvers have now been made for over a century.

The copy of the contract of January 4, 1847 in the possession of the Society contains revisions in Colt's handwriting and the original signatures of Colt and Walker, reproduced above, but the text has minor variations from the version preserved in the files of the War Department. A reproduction of the latter may be found in *A History of the Colt Revolver*, by Haven and Belden (New York, 1940) at page 275. Comparison of the two texts indicates that the Society's copy was in all probability the first to be signed. Since the signatures are unwitnessed and without seals, it is apparent that the parties had afterthoughts of a legalistic nature which were inserted in a second signed copy. This latter was the one submitted for the approval of the Secretary of War, William L. Marcy, and endorsed by him on January 6th (see illustration in Haven and Belden, supra, p. 278).

The text of the Society's autograph copy (showing the corrections made in Colt's hand) reads as follows:

> Memorandum of an agreement made this 4th day of January 1847 between Samuel Colt (inventor of Colts Patent Repeating Pistols) and Samuel H. Walker, Capt. U. S. Rifles, and acting by authority of and direction of the Secretary of War, for the immediate construction of 1000 or a larger number if hereafter determined by the Secretary of War, of said Colts patent Repeating Pistols, made to correspond with the model recently got up by said Colt and Walker and being as follows, viz,
>
> The barrels to be nine inches long and Rifled made of the best hammered Cast Steel and of a bore suited to carrying round balls, fifty to the pound with strength [suited]* *sufficient* to firing an elongated ball weighing [fifty-] *Thirty*-two to the pound.
>
> The cylinders to be made of hammered cast steel with chambers for six charges each, and of a length, size, and strength, sufficient to be charged with an elongated ball 32 to the pound.
>
> The lockwork with the exception of the hammer to be made of the best cast or double sheet steel and the parts sufficiently uniform to be interchanged, with slight or no refitting.
>
> The Hammer and lock frame to be of the best Gun iron and case hardened.
>
> The stock to be of sound black walnut, bound and secured by a strong strop of [brass or] iron.

* Words in brackets crossed out; words in italics added.

The Pistols answering to the above specification *to be maid* with the least possible delay, [and turned in to the Government in lots of not less than one hundred] and to be paid for at the rate of [not less than] *$25* each on delivery,—[the whole to be inspected and approved by Capt. Walker] *in New York in passels or lots of 100 each.* The first hundred of said arms to be completed, if possible, in three months from the date this contract is confirmed by the Secretary of War, and all the remainder as soon thereafter as possible, and not under any circumstances to exceed five or six months if the arms can possibly be completed by the dividing up of the work [of] *or* the employing of two sets of hands to work night and day.

In addition to the arms, it is agreed between the parties that there shall be furnished one entire set of springs for every 10 pistols, one entire lockwork, one *spring vice one* extra set of cones and screws for every 25 pistols One Bullet mould for every 10 Pistols [One Bullet mould] to cast one elongated ball. *One do* to every 50 Pistols to cast six elongated balls at one casting.

One Powder Flask, one screw driver, one nipple wrench, and one lever for driving home the balls for each *pair of* Pistol. For the whole including the additional sixth chamber in the cylinder and all the above mentioned extra fixings, [a fair] *a* price, not exceeding
Three to be allowed on each Pistol in addition to the Contract price.
The above contract subject to the aproval of the Secy of War.

NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

Practically everyone has been talking about the weather this winter. Back in 1780-81, our ancestors had what they called the "hard winter". At that time it first snowed about December 20 and continued intermittently until the middle of March, 1781. One account reports snow five feet deep, orchards completely covered and cattle being fed on roofs of barns. This same report observed that the maple sugar season was unusually good that year and that the spring was early. 1856-57 was also noted for heavy snows and intense cold. On January 23 in Hartford the thermometer fell to 15° below zero, the 24th, 27° below and on the 25th and 26th, 12° below zero.

The notice in our last *Bulletin* requesting contributions toward a fund to make Kodachrome slides of museum specimens suffered because of lack of space. In making it conform, we omitted much that apparently was necessary to convince contributors of its importance, for although many commented on it, the goal was not achieved. In short, what we want is to have slides made of our portraits, prints and museum articles. These can be used to illustrate talks or be loaned to other historical societies, clubs and interested groups. Some of the subjects possible from our existing collection might include Indian relics, silver, pewter, art and artists, wooden ware, furniture, iron implements, glass, china, prints and engravers. Such a collection of slides would do much toward interesting people in our work and in securing new friends and supporters. The life blood of any organization such as this, is a large and active membership. If we can illustrate our collection in this manner it would go far towards pointing out objects of importance wanted

for preservation in your Historical Society. Perhaps this alone would make the project worth while. The most efficient method of making slides is to employ a photographer by the day. One hundred dollars is needed at this time to continue the project, and contributions are now in order for this purpose.

The need for more Contributing Members is still urgent. This year forty-one persons responded to our appeal made last spring and when the new bills are distributed next month, we hope more will come to our aid.

ASSOCIATE LIBRARY IN MILFORD

We have recently been interested in a study of early libraries in Connecticut. Four of these organizations published their constitutions and by-laws during the eighteenth century: the Union Library Society of Wethersfield in 1784, the Franklin Library Company in 1794, the Union Library of New Milford in 1796, and the Hartford Library Company in 1797. A manuscript in this Society, considerably earlier than any of these, is the original agreement of the Associate Library in Milford, dated March 31, 1761, a copy of which follows.

This Agreement made and concluded at Milford this 31st Day of March Anno Domini 1761 — Wittnesseth —

That We whose Names are hereunto Subscribed with a Desire and view to promote Useful Knowledge and Piety do Agree to unite and Join together in a Society or Company for that Purpose; And for that End, do agree to have a Library of Books, in Joint Partnership, for the Common Use and Improvement of the Said Company, to be known by the Name of the Associate Library in Milford. — And for the Effecting of this Design, We Do agree upon the following Articles — (viz.)

1. That no Book of Divinity, Shall Ever be Admitted into Said Library, but Such as are agreable to the Great Gospel Doctrins, as Contained in the Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catachisms, agreed upon by the Revd Assembly of Divines at Westminster.

2. That no Plays, Shall ever be admitted into Said Library, nor any Novels or Romances, which have a Tendency to corrupt the Morals of People.

3. That Revd Mr. Thomas Clap President of Yale College, the Revd Mr. Naphtali Daget Professor of Divinity at Yale College, and the Revd Mr. Job Prudden Pastor of the Second Society in Milford, are chosen as a Committee and Desired to Chuse the Books of which Said Library is to Consist, from Time to Time, as there may be Occasion; and upon the Death or Removal of Either of the above mentioned Gentlemen, the two Surviving ones to chuse his Successor, except in the Case of the Revd Mr. Prudden & then his Successor, for the Business above Mentioned, is to be Chosen by the Said Company or Proprietors, and in this Method the Succession of the above Said Committe is to be continued During the Continuance of Said Library, & Such Choice of Successors Shall from time to time, be Certified to the Clerk of Said Company or Proprietors, & be by him Recorded.

Provided Nevertheless, if any one of the Company or Proprietors Shall at any Time Desire any Book of Practical Divinity, to be admited into Said Library, it Shall be admitted, if the Comitte Appointed to Chuse the Books,

Shall Judge it agreable to the Test mentioned in the first Article of this agreement.

4. In order to any ones being a Member of Said Company, and a Proprietor in Said Library, He Shall Subscrib his Name to this Agreement, and within one Month after Such Subscription, pay in to the hands of a Treasurer that Shall be chosen by the Said Company or Subscribers, the Sum of twenty Shillings Lawful Mony, for a Common Stock, to be Improved, for the Use & Purpose above mentioned, & under Such Regulations as herein already are or hereafter Shall be Expressed.

5. No Proprietor Shall give his Right by will to more than one Heir, & incase any Proprietor Dies intestate his Right Shall Decend to his eldest Heir.

6. No Proprietor Shall Sel his Right to more than one Person & that Person to be Such an one, as the major Part of the Company Shall approve of.

7. Whoever Shall be Intituled to a Right in Said Library by Gift or otherwise, Shall be Debared the Use & improvement thereof, until he Shall Subscrib his Name to this Agreement, and become obliged by Bond to observe & conform to the Rules thereof.

8. The foregoing Articles of agreement, Shall be Strictly observed & conformed to, by the Company or Proprietors; and Never be Altered under any Pretence whatsoever, but the Articles following Shall be liable to Such Alterations & Aditions, as the Company from time to time Shall find most Conducive to the great end Proposed, by a majority of the Proprietors.

9. The Company of Subscribers or Proprietors, Shall Annually Chuse one of their Number to Serve them as a Clark, who Shall faithfully Record all the Acts & Determinations of the Said Company or Proprietors, untill another be Chosen in his Room, & Shall give attested Copies thereof, to any Proprietor requesting the Same, & paying the Reasonable Cost thereof; which Clerk Shall bind and oblige himself, his Heirs, Executors & Administrators, unto the Treasurer, of the Company, expressed by name, who Shall be chosen by Said Company or proprietors, in an Obligatory Bond of one Hundred Pounds Lawful Mony, Conditioned for his faithful Performmence of his Said Office of a Clark & for his Delivering up any or all Records, Copies & Papers, whatsoever, belonging to Said Company, when called for by them. unavoidable Accidents excepted.

10. A Treasurer Shall be Chosen by Sd Company, from among themselves annually, who Shall Receive & take Care of all monies Contributed unto a Common Stock, for the Purchaseing a Library, & all other monies & Estate whatsoever that Shall belong to Said Company or Proprietors, by Donations, fines, &c. and the Same Deliver, to Such Person or Persons from time to time as Shall be appointed & improved by Said Company, to Receve & lay out the Same according to the Orders & Instructions, by them Given, of which Receipts & Disbustments, he Shall keep a true account, & procure authentick Receipts from Such as Receive it of him, & Said Treasurer Shall continu in Said Office until another be chosen in his Room, & Shall bind and oblige himself his Heirs, Executors & Administrators to the Library Keeper, expressed by Name, & chosen by Said Company, in an Obligatory Bond of five hundred pounds Lawful Mony, Conditioned for his faithfully performing & Executing the office of Treasurer, & Delivering up all Monies, Estate, obligations book accompts & writings whatsoever, Lodged in his hands

belonging to Said Proprietors, when by them Regularly Required & Demanded. unavoidable accidents excepted.

11. a Committe Consisting of five proprietors at least Shall be annually chosen by Said Company who Shall have Power to Receive of the Treasurer the monies Deposited in his hands, and the Same lay out, in purchaseing Such Books as the Library is to consist of, and in repairing the Same, when there Shall be occasion, & for Defreying the necessary Charges ariseing thereby, which Committe Shall have power to Judg of & assess Damages Don to Books, to Judg upon all Breaches of the orders & Regulations that ever Shall be agreed upon by the Proprietors; & their Judgment Shall be Decisive in all Cases not Exceeding five Shillings Lawful mony; but in all Cases of greater vallue an appeal may be made to the whole Company at their next meeting, the Said Company being Duly warned, the major part Shall have Power to Act and finally Determin the Same.

12. a Library keeper who is one of the Proprietors & an Inhabitant of this town Shall be Annually chosen by the Company, who Shall Receive and Carefully keep all Books belonging to Said Company's Library, & in each Book Inscribe the Price thereof, & that it belongs to Said Library & keep a Cattalogue thereof; and according to Directions hereafter provided, the Said Books Deliver to & Receive from the Said Proprietors, & a true entry thereof make from time to time, & also of the time of Deliuering out & Receiving in the Same, & Said Library keeper Shall also Due information make, of any uncommon Damage don to any Book, to the aforesaid Committe or to any one of them, within one week after it is Returned in to the Library, & Shall enter in the Library Book, the Said Comitte's assment of Said Damage, & Shall inform the Proprietor So assesed thereof, the next Library Day, & Sd Damaged Book Shalnot be allowed to be taken out of the Library, till the Damage hath been apprised by Sd Committe, & Sd Library keeper Shall Bind & oblige himself his Heirs Executors & Aministrators in a Bond of five Hundred pounds Lawful Mony, unto one of the Committe by Name, of the Company, annually Chosen, the Condition whereof Shall be, that he will faithfuly Execute the trust Reposed in him, & will Deliver up any or all Books, Accompts & Papers whatsoever, belonging to Said Company, when by them Regularly Required, unavoidable accidents excepted.

13. The Second monday of every other month Shall be the fixed Times for takeing out & Returning in the Books & be known by the name of Library Day in the Records &c of Said Company: and the Library keeper Shall not Deliver out any Book at any other Time.

14. Every Book Shall be Returned into the Library upon the Day fixed & appointed for that Purpose, next after that on which it was taken out, but he that takes a folio or Quarto & hath not finished the Perusal thereof, before Said time of returning it, Shall have liberty to take it out a Second time, if he desires it, & Whoever Shall Detain a Book Unnessarily out of the Library a longer time then is herein prescribed Shal pay into the treasury, the following Penalties (viz.) for a folio three pence pr Day, for a Quarto two pence pr Day, for an octavo one penny pr Day, & for Books of a lesser Denomination one Copper pr Day, until returned.

15. All uncomon Damage Done to any Book Shall be paid for by the Proprietor who took the Same out of the Library, according to the assesment

of the Committe aforesaid, which assesment Shall be made & an account thereof Given, to the Library Keeper, on or before the Next Library Day, after the Return of Such Damaged Book, & in case the Proprietor so assesed, neglect paying the Same, on or before the Second Library Day after Such assesment, he Shall be holly Denyed the Use of Said Library, untill the Same be paid.

16. If any Book belonging to Said Library be lost thro the Carelesness or Neglect of the Proprietor who took the Same out thereof, he Shall pay for the Same into the Treasury Somuch as Said Committe Shall Judge equitable.

17. If any Proprietor Shall Lend any Book belonging to Said Library, to any Person out of the House where he liveth he Shall pay into the Treasury a Fine equal to the prime Cost of Said Book.

18. When Different Proprietors Desire the Same Book out of the Library at the Same Time, the Library Keeper Shall deliver it to the Proprietor who bids highest for the use of it, which Mony Shall be put into the Treasury.

19. There Shall be a meeting of the Proprietors or Subscribers on the Second Monday of March Annually for the Choice of Officers or any other Business relating & conducive to the Good End Proposed, Necessary to be transacted and Done, and upon the Death or Removal of either the Library Keeper, Treasurer, or Clerk, there Shall be an occasional meeting of the Proprietors for Supplying Such vacanie, notified & warned by the aforesaid Committe, if they Judg it necessary, at least one week before the Time of Such Meeting, the Notification Expresing both the Time & Place thereof. all votes or acts to be Determined by a Majority of the Proprietors.

20. One of the Company or Proprietors of Said Library, Shall be by them Chosen to Collect all monies, Due to Said Proprietors, by fines or other wise, & being So Chosen, Shall be thereby fully Authorised & Impowered in the Name & behalf of Said Company or Proprietors, to Collet, Sew for; & Recover, the Same, & all Monies So Recovered Shall be by him put into the Treasury of Said Proprietors. which Collector Shall Bind & oblige himself his Heirs Executors & Administrators, to the Treasurer by name of Said Proprietors or Company, in a Bond of one Hundred Pounds Lawful Mony, Conditioned for his faithfully Discharging his office of Collector in every Respect, as Set forth & expressed in this Article.

21. The Said Company Shall have Power to Purge Themselves of any disorderly Unwholsome Member that in a Continued Course Counteracts ye Rules & Orders herein agreed upon, and plainly Subverts and hinders the good Design of promoting Useful Knowledge and Piety aimed at; half of the Mony which he put into the Common Stock being returned back unto him, and the Judgment and Resolve of the Company in Such a Case being once made and pased, it Shall be decisive and Final.

22. Each Proprietor Shall bind and oblige himself in a particular Bond of ten Pounds Lawful Mony payable to the Treasurer by Name, of Said Company; to the faithful Observation of, & Strict Complyance with, all and every Article, included and Contained in this agreement, already Made, or that Shall be hereafter agreed upon, by Said Company, Consistent with the eight first Articles of this Agreement.

In Testimony that we do Severally consent and agree to the aforesaid Articles and Rules We Do each of Us hereunto Set our Hands.

Job Prudden
Noah Baldwin
Joseph Platt
Jonathan fowller
Edmund Treat
Jonathan Treat
Ephraim Strong
James Norton
Job Clarke
Elihu Sanford
Comfort Hubbell
peleg bauldwin
John Peck
John Treat
Benjamin prichard
Joseph Treat
Nehemiah Smith
Isaac Clark
Josiah Camp
Enoch prudden
Andrew durand
Aaron fenn
Benjamin Hine
John Prudden jur
Barnabas Woodcock
Jonathan Prudden
John Down
John Fenn
Jesse Lambard Junor
Thomas Webb
Jeremiah Baldwin
John Durand
Fitch Welch
Solomon Baldwin
John Clark
Joseph Platt ye 3
Samuel Prudden
William Powelle
Nathan Clark Junr
Samll Treat
Ebenezer Botchford
Joseph Whitmore

Edward Allen
Benja Fenn Jun
Nathan Clark
Nathan Brisco
Ephraim Northrup
Thomas Canfield
Josph Treat
Ebenezer Smith junr
John plum
John woodruff Junr
Abigail Ashbon
Joseph Sanford
Nathaniel Camp Junr
freelove Wheeler
Elias Carrington
Nathanael Buckingham
Samuel Ford
Nehemiah Woodcock
Lucy Webber
Benjamin Clark
Abel Summers
William Battle
Benja Fenn Jur
Fitch welch
Hannah Clark
Enoch Clark
Samuel Prudden
Ann Clark
Joseph Robinson
Susanna Gunne
Mary Fenn
Josiah Sherman
Sarah Fenn
William attwater
Stephen Treat
Nathan Brisco
John Ford
Joseph Clark
Thankful Baldwin
Ephraim Buckingham
Fletcher Prudden
David Fullar

William Fowler
Isaac Buckingham
Isaac Clarke
Frances Treat
Martha Welch
Lazarus Northrup
Wm----- Andrew
Samll Humphrvile
David Treat
Jeremiah Bull
John Down Junr
Richard Platt
Elias Carrington Junr
David Bristol
Newton Prudden
Nathan Bristoll
Jesse P Lambert
Samll Higby
Lois Summers
Jeremiah Smith
Ebenezer Smith
Banjamin Fenn
Richard Treat Junr
Sarah Green
Daniel Baldwin
David Lambard
Richard Fenn
Caleb Austin
Eli Green
Aaron Fenn
Charles Oviatt
Sarah Treat
John Ford
Joseph Rogers
Thomas Ford
Anne Platt
Esther Treat
John Welch
Thaddeus Ford
Hannah Smith
John Plumb Jr
Erastus Scranton

The Price of these Bulletins is ten cents each.